

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Trade Far, Far Away: First Consul to China

Standard: I. Culture
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
VIII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Examine early trade between the United States and China
- Apply primary documents to non-fiction reading and writing
- Analyze the intermingling of politics and commerce in trade

Time: 1 class period

Materials: Documents: **1786 The Consul at Canton**
1786 Samuel Shaw Reporting from China

Resources: Excerpt from *A Journey Shared: The United States and China*

Exercises: *Navigating the Path of Trade*
Images: *Collage of Canton and the China Trade*
My Dealings with China
A Chinese Fan
Colored pencils/crayons

Procedures:

1. Provide students with the reading, *Excerpt from A Journey Shared*.
2. Have students read and then briefly discuss the significance of the *Empress of China*, Samuel Shaw, and the complexities of America's initial commercial contacts with China.
3. Distribute copies of the documents, *The Consul at Canton*, and *Samuel Shaw Reporting from China*. [Note: Canton is today called Guangzhou.]
4. Ask students to describe Samuel Shaw's job as Consul of the United States at Canton in China.
5. Have students examine the first 13 paragraphs of *Samuel Shaw Reporting from China*. Identify the European countries involved in trade with China, determine items traded, and note the advantages that some countries appeared to have.

6. Provide students with *Navigating the Path of Trade in Canton*. Have students find evidence of these steps in the reading, *Excerpt from a Journey Shared*, and the two documents—particularly paragraphs 18–29 in *Reporting from China*. Discuss the student’s selections of FASCINATING and FRUSTRATING. Analyze the complexities of trade transactions in Canton.

7. Provide students with the *Exercise, Collage of Images: Canton*. Compare the images in the Collage with the information in *Navigating the Path*. Have each student number 1–8 on a sheet of paper and identify/describe each of the images.

8. Review students’ results. Share the actual descriptions of the eight items with the students. (Answer key included below.)

9. Use the items from *Navigating the Path of Trade in Canton* and the *Collage* to create one of the following:

Option 1

Write a description of American trade with China from the perspective of Samuel Shaw. Use the journal form, *My Dealings with China*, to compose this story. Write in the first person. Additional facts and quotes from the reading and documents may be included.

Option 2

Draw a montage of images on the blank fan to tell the story of Samuel Shaw and trade in Canton. (Note: Additional information about the significance of fans in Chinese culture can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_fan

10. Review the results of Options 1 and 2. Students should read their stories or display and explain their fans. Discuss the cultural, economic, and political implications of trade with China. ■

Collage of Canton: Image Identification

- 1 The Anchorage for Western Ships at Whampoa** (circa 1850) by Youqua. (PEM M4478 "Junk Island (and Junk River which separates the island from Whampoa) is seen far to the right...." [pg. 414], Peabody Essex Museum as shown on the website:
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_places/pages/cwBTW_1850c_M4478_Wham.htm
- 2 Fan Depicting the Whampoa Anchorage in China** (ca. 1784). This fan features the only known picture of the first legal American ship to trade in China, the *Empress of China*, shown on the far left. Her cargo included silver coins and 30 tons of ginseng from the Pacific coast of North America. She returned carrying tea, silk, and porcelain—including a tea service for George Washington. [Historical Society of Pennsylvania [cwBTW_1784c_EmpresCh_met80 as seen on the website:
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_commodities/pages/cwOF_1784c_EmpressChina.htm
- 3 A Merchant Naval Captain** (1830–1835) attributed to George Chinnery. The captain is shown on the deck of a ship off of Canton. China trade captains and supercargoes were usually young men from wealthy families. [National Maritime Museum, cwPT_1830c_nmmBHC3169 as seen on the website:
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_people/pages/cwPT_1830c_nmmBHC3169_Cpt.htm
- 4 The Chinese Merchant, Mouqua** (ca. 1840s) by Lam Qua. Mouqua was one of the most prosperous hong merchants. He is shown wearing robes that indicate his official rank. The merchants were responsible for all foreign trade in Canton. [Peabody Essex Museum, cwPT_1840s_ct79] as seen on the website:
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_people/pages/cwPT_1840s_ct79_Mouqua.htm
- 5 Chinese Tea.** One of the imports most desired by Americans. Tea was China's primary export.
- 6 Porcelain.** The Chinese shipped their famous blue and white porcelain to the United States and the rest of the world. The porcelain often showed imaginary landscapes, but the Chinese quickly adapted and painted Western themes as well. One of the earliest American orders for a tea service came from George Washington. Pieces of this service may still be seen at Mount Vernon today.
- 7 Ginseng.** An herb used by the Chinese in the preparation of medicine. Part of the first American cargo on the Empress of China, ginseng was highly profitable until the market became saturated.
- 8 Fan showing the Foreign “Factories” in Canton** (ca. 1790–1800). By imperial decree, foreign traders were confined to their trading houses or factories in Canton. Traders often had Chinese artisans paint their surroundings on porcelain or, in this case, a fan. These items now serve as historical “documents” showing which traders were present. [Peabody Essex Museum cwOF_1790s_E80202] as seen on the website:
http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_commodities/pages/cwOF_1790c_E80202_Canton.htm